

Promoting Sustainable Food Consumption

Research in Canada and elsewhere indicates that there is a large gap between individuals' positive attitudes toward using ethical principles to make sustainable food purchasing decisions, and the extent to which they actually make these choices. Two-thirds of consumers surveyed in Kings County, Nova Scotia say that they value ethical principles in deciding on the type of food they purchase. Despite this support, research has found that most of these concerned consumers do not actually translate these attitudes into making ethical purchases. A study of UK consumers found that only 20% of those who were supportive of ethical purchasing actually translated their attitudes into specific purchasing decisions in a 12 month period. Focus groups conducted with consumers in Nova Scotia indicated that despite the best of intentions, there was a significant gap between their good intentions and actual purchasing decisions. Yet to increase food security and decrease detrimental environmental impacts of food consumption, consumers must translate positive ethical attitudes toward food into making actual purchases, and community stakeholders must develop the capacity to support the shift.

A range of barriers have been identified which explain this gap between attitudes and behaviour. The three most prominent are lack of easily accessible and useful information on which to base decisions, limited accessibility of sustainable products, and cost.

This research project has developed a program to help address these barriers titled "Great Meals for a Change." Through a dinner event, and a series of activities, this program helps consumers more clearly understand the principles of sustainable food, and how to follow through on good intentions with respect to food purchasing and consumption.

Research for this project is underway now and will be completed in June. A paper for this conference would be ready by July 31.

Authors:

Dr. Edith Callaghan
School of Business
Acadia University
Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada B4P 2R6

Dr. Alan Warner
School of Recreation Management & Community Development
Acadia University
Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada B4P 2R6

Cate Truman, Masters Student
School of Recreation Management & Community Development
Acadia University
Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada B4P 2R6